

Very Rev. Mark D. Stec, VF

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Welcome to St. Joseph Catholic School. St. Joseph Catholic School is a Catholic community of students, teachers, parents and support staff working collaboratively to create a safe, caring, supportive, innovative and academically challenging environment for your child. This community fosters individual spiritual growth and self-esteem while promoting respect, understanding and appreciation. Also, we like to have fun!

One of the goals of our program is to prepare students for a successful and rewarding future by developing their Catholic faith in addition to their academic skills. As the Pastor of St. Joseph Catholic School, it is a great source of joy for me watching the children grow and watching faith blossom. They are little sponges that will soak up pretty much anything. I am blessed with an excellent principal and faculty. They have joined in the desire to instill faith and piety in their students. I have seen them rejoice over their students' successes and fret over the failures and tragedies that befall their students. I love hearing the students engaged in worship of God. I love their earnest and trusting faith.

You as parents are partners in this endeavor. I see some parents make great efforts to get their children to Sunday Mass, teach them the truth of faith, support the parish and school, and carry the rest of load of their very busy schedules. I admire your dedication.

This said, the same institution that exalts my heart also crushes it. I am saddened by the significant number of students who do not attend Mass on the weekend. I grieve that this blossoming of faith, of these young bright faces started and taught in our school, can wander further and further away from faith because of a reduced commitment to our Catholic Community.

I am aware that some parents work on weekends because of the nature of their jobs, some are trying to share two faith traditions with their children. I encourage all of us to teach our children that it necessary to give God the one hour of liturgical worship He asks for on Sundays.

The time we have for Mass built into the school schedule is not a replacement for the weekend Masses. Instead it is only the beginning to appreciate the mass when we can celebrate it anew as a family.

Despite many commitments and the busyness of our lives, I know many parents who make the sacrifices to attend Mass and teach their children to do the same. I appreciate and laud their effort. I know it is not easy. I respect those who do this. I ask all of us to put the practice of our Catholic Faith before all other activities that we are engaged in.

Furthermore, when we teach our children that making such sacrifices are important and not a burden, we appreciate more fully the effort and sacrifices that our parishes and parishioners, at St. Joseph-Olney, Holy Cross-Wendelin and St. Joseph-Stringtown, make for our school. Our Parishes are willing to give tremendous amounts of resources, energy, and time to make our school a reality. They do this as an investment in the future. Let us not squander or take for granted this investment of others.

I take my duties as pastor seriously. I will challenge you, The Catholic Church is supposed to call people to holiness and excellence. I know the conventional wisdom is to soft

peddle or say nothing at all. We don't want people to get upset after all. We are supposed to be the Church of nice. I don't want people to attend another church because the priest said something I don't like or want to be told. I do worry when I see Catholics drift away from the church. All I want is for your children to be holy. I want you parents to be holy.

Dear Parents: To you who make the sacrifices and make your way to Mass Sunday in and Sunday out, who show up to help despite your busy schedules, who volunteer...thank you. To my school parents who don't do these things, challenge yourself to excellence, want your child's faith and love for God and His church to grow as much as I do, ...make the effort, the sacrifice...we're right there with you! I will keep doing my part, I will insist that my school and other education programs do the same, but each parent needs to do theirs as well.

Those who have had me as their pastor know it is not my nature to shrink away from a struggle or to ignore or sugar coat an issue. It is in my nature to call you to holiness and excellence and nothing less. I need partners in this...and you parents are just the partners in this I need.